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RELIGION IN POLITICS

by

Norman I. Gelman

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RICHARD M. BOECKEL, *Editor*

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RELIGION IN POLITICS

FOR THE FIRST TIME since 1928, when Al Smith was defeated in a bitterly contested election that split the Solid South, a prominent Catholic layman, Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, is a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination. With the party's national convention less than a year away, public opinion polls among Democratic voters show Kennedy running neck and neck with Adlai E. Stevenson in a large field of possible rivals.¹ Stevenson, twice-defeated Democratic standard-bearer, has said he will not be a candidate in 1960. Political observers, including backers of other aspirants for the nomination, at present generally regard Kennedy as "the man to beat."

EFFECTS OF RELIGION ON KENNEDY'S CANDIDACY

Among professional politicians, Kennedy's bid for the nomination has raised once more the delicate question of a supposed anti-Catholic bias in the American electorate, and the related question of the influence of the so-called Catholic vote. Bias against election of a Catholic as President is widely regarded as having played a decisive part in Smith's defeat. Without exception, political leaders are agreed in their public statements that Kennedy's religious faith should make no difference one way or the other. "As far as I am concerned," President Eisenhower told his press conference on July 9, "it's a perfectly extraneous question. . . . If I saw any man that I thought was really a qualified, responsible individual running for office, my vote would never be changed on the basis of his religion."

Judgments of the politicians vary, however, as to whether a Catholic actually could be elected to the highest office. On this score, President Eisenhower had "no opinion whatso-

¹ The American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup poll) reported on Aug. 14 that rank-and-file Democrats gave Kennedy and Stevenson each 26 per cent of their first-choice votes. Trailing were Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas (12 per cent), Sen. Estes Kefauver of Tennessee (9 per cent), Sen. Stuart Symington of Missouri (7 per cent), and Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota (5 per cent). No other candidate received as many as 5 per cent of first-choice votes.

ever." But former President Truman on a television panel program, May 4, said he thought a candidate's religion would vitally affect his chances. "I think it is too bad that that is the case." He added: "I don't think it ought to happen in this country. I am giving you a frank answer to it." On the other hand, Vice President Richard M. Nixon, leading Republican hopeful for 1960, told reporters, Oct. 31, 1958, that Kennedy's religion "would not be a liability" in any nation-wide election. "Very fortunately," Nixon went on, "the 1928 attitudes regarding religious bias and religious prejudice have changed substantially."

The key question at this time, however, is not how Kennedy would fare in an election, but how his religion will affect his chances of nomination. The answer is likely to depend, not on the relative strength of Catholic and anti-Catholic votes within the Democratic convention, but upon the politicians' rule-of-thumb assessment of how the party's prospects of capturing the White House in 1960 might be affected by nominating a Catholic. Thus several leading Democrats of the Catholic faith are said to oppose Kennedy's nomination primarily because of his religion.

Gov. David L. Lawrence of Pennsylvania, long a power in Democratic politics, was reported by Joseph Alsop on July 29 to favor Symington over Kennedy because "he feels that he [Lawrence], as a Catholic, lost great numbers of Protestant votes" in 1958. Later "dope stories" had Gov. Lawrence favoring Stevenson but, in any case, opposed to Kennedy's nomination. Democratic Party Chairman Paul M. Butler told a television audience on July 13 that as a Catholic, and one who had been in politics for 33 years, "I certainly do believe" that being a Catholic would handicap a presidential candidate.

Sen. Paul H. Douglas of Illinois, a non-Catholic, wrote in March concerning Catholic opposition to Kennedy or any other Catholic candidate for the presidency: "Politicians are worriers. Worriers are cautious. I am afraid this is especially true of many Catholic politicians. . . . They worry that the campaign would lead to divisive discussions of the religious issue; that the candidate might be defeated and that the cause of tolerance might be set back once again."² Douglas's own opinion was that "Given the right man, a Catholic *should* be elected President."

² Paul H. Douglas, "A Catholic Can Become President," *Coronet*, March 1959, p. 110.

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DECLINE OF RELIGIOUS BIAS IN AMERICAN VOTING

All political leaders who have publicly discussed probable effects of the religious issue in 1960 appear to agree that religious bias is much less important politically now than it was a few decades ago. The change was dramatically evidenced in the Democratic landslide at the off-year elections in 1958. Seven Catholics were elected or re-elected state governors—Democrats Edmund G. Brown in California, Michael V. DiSalle in Ohio, Foster Furcolo in Massachusetts, J. J. Hickey in Wyoming, David L. Lawrence in Pennsylvania, Stephen L. R. McNichols in Colorado, and Republican Christopher Del Sesto in Rhode Island.

Connecticut re-elected its Jewish governor, Abraham A. Ribicoff; sent a Catholic, Thomas J. Dodd, to the U.S. Senate; and named five Catholics to its six-man delegation in the House of Representatives.³ In Maine a Catholic, Gov. Edmund S. Muskie, received nearly 61 per cent of the two-party vote for U.S. senator and led the Democrats to a near sweep of that once rock-ribbed Republican state.

Nine Catholics, all Democrats, were elected to the Senate in 1958. The newcomers, in addition to Dodd and Muskie, were Philip A. Hart of Michigan, Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota, and Stephen Young of Ohio; Dennis Chavez of New Mexico, John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, Mike Mansfield of Montana, and John O. Pastore of Rhode Island were re-elected by wide margins. Senate holdovers included four Catholics,⁴ making a total of 13 as compared with a total of four in the Senate after the 1924 election a generation ago. Ninety-one Catholics (77 Democrats, 14 Republicans) were elected to the House last year, as compared with a total of 32 in 1924.

Public opinion polls indicate that Catholic presidential candidates, as well as gubernatorial and congressional candidates, would encounter less prejudice among voters now than formerly. Sixty-eight per cent of voters participating in a Gallup poll, reported May 7, said they would vote for a Catholic for President; 24 per cent said they would not. The respective percentages had been 62 and 31 in a similar poll in March 1940. A considerable variation of opinion

³ Dodd's opponent, the incumbent Republican, William A. Purtell, also was a Catholic as were at least three of the defeated Republican House candidates. Catholics make up an estimated 37 to 47 per cent of Connecticut's population.

⁴ Democrats Frank J. Lausche of Ohio, Pat McNamara of Michigan, James E. Murray of Montana, and Joseph C. O'Mahoney of Wyoming.

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between North and South showed up in the 1959 poll. Thirty-five per cent of voters in the South, as against only 20 per cent of voters outside the South, said they would not vote for a Catholic for President.

VALIDITY OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLS ON BIGOTRY

Results of the polls provide some sort of index, however imprecise, to changes in the intensity of religious prejudice since 1940. But for several reasons their usefulness as guides to the influence of religious bias in the 1960 contest must be questioned. One problem is what students of polling techniques call "the prestige response." So evidently is religious prejudice frowned upon that an unknown proportion of the people will hide their prejudices from an outsider; some may even disguise their true feelings to themselves. The extent of religious prejudice as such therefore is probably substantially understated in poll findings.

Of at least equal importance is the fact that the poll questions in this case were posed in a vacuum. Those interviewed were asked to choose between a cardboard Catholic and an unobjectionable non-Catholic. All other factors were eliminated from the political equation. As every study of voting behavior has shown, an individual responds in a flesh-and-blood voting situation to an array of factors—party, candidate, issues. If the combined weight of other factors is relatively high, it would take an intensely felt religious prejudice to alter the balance.

Furthermore, since the Catholic candidate for President in 1960 would be a Democrat, it is important also to know what proportion of those who say they would not vote for a Catholic would not vote for a Democrat in any case. Such evidence as exists on the political orientation of religious groups shows that, outside the South, a majority of Protestants are disposed to vote Republican, while the bulk of Catholics and of Jews are disposed to vote Democratic. Because the anti-Catholic vote, occurring almost exclusively among Protestants, is believed to be concentrated in the North and West among those who normally vote Republican, it may be that anti-Catholic prejudice would serve largely to reinforce rather than to alter voting decisions reached on more fundamental grounds.

Of more importance, therefore, in assessing Kennedy's chances in 1960, should he receive the nomination, are the

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polls which match him against a named Republican candidate. The latest of these, Aug. 12, showed Kennedy leading Vice President Nixon 52 per cent to 48 per cent. In July, prior to Nixon's tour of the U.S.S.R., Kennedy's lead had been 61 per cent to 39 per cent. Kennedy has consistently piled up wider margins over New York's Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller than over Nixon.

NATURE OF ANTI-CATHOLIC BIAS; BLANSHARD VIEW

In spite of the evidence that religious bias is declining, in spite of Kennedy's performance in the public opinion polls, the "Catholic issue" remains a genuine hazard to the prospects of the Massachusetts senator. To begin with, a large proportion of the population—58 per cent of the Protestants, according to Gallup—have yet to learn that Kennedy is a Catholic. Moreover, although it may be taken for granted that no Republican candidate would countenance anti-Catholic campaign activities against his opponent, a certain amount of organized and unorganized opposition on religious grounds would inevitably make itself felt. Finally, insofar as Kennedy's position on campaign issues happened to touch the ever-sensitive religious nerve, his faith might become more a factor than it now seems.

The anti-Catholic response in politics is related in part to prejudice and in part to supposed political attitudes of the Roman Catholic Church, which Catholic laymen are presumed to share. From the standpoint of Catholic candidates, not much can be done about outright prejudice. However, they can seek to control and, to a certain extent, overcome anti-Catholicism based on church doctrine.

In recent years the most militant opposition to the Catholic Church in the realm of politics has come from an organization known as Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State. The most vocal antagonist of the Catholic Church has been Paul Blanshard, a lawyer, writer and sometime public official, whose books include *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power*; *The Irish and Catholic Power*; *The Right to Read*; and the key work, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, now in its second edition after a long run on the best-seller lists in 1949-50.

Blanshard's thesis⁵ is that the hierarchy of the Roman

⁵ All Blanshard quotations are from *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (second edition, 1958).

Catholic Church is "an autocratic moral monarchy in a liberal democracy" which claims the right to make all sorts of political decisions for its communicants. They "are compelled by the very nature of their Church's authoritarian structure to accept non-religious as well as religious policies that have been imposed upon them from abroad." The dogma of papal infallibility, argues Blanshard, quoting the 19th century British Catholic, Lord Acton, "makes civil legislation on all points of contract, marriage, education, clerical immunities, mortmain, even on many questions of taxation and common law, subject to the legislation of the Church, which would be simply the arbitrary will of the Pope."

As an example of specific conflict with American political practice, Blanshard cites Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*, issued in 1864, which denounced as one of "the principal errors of our time" the contention that "the Church ought to be separated from the State and the State from the Church." Blanshard also notes disapprovingly Catholic attitudes on secular education, birth control and censorship, and the opinions of individual prelates on such matters as "McCarthyism" and American relations with Spain and Yugoslavia.

Despite this arraignment of the Catholic Church and its American hierarchy, Blanshard does not counsel automatic political reprisal against Catholic candidates. On the contrary, he says: "Any general, blanket boycott of Catholic candidates for public office seems unwise and unfair. Surely an American should not be penalized automatically in political life because he has been born into a certain church, and because, like most human beings, he has continued to be true to the faith of his fathers. [But] he has no right to use his religion as a shield to conceal his views on such subjects as education, medicine, birth control and censorship or to prevent reasonable questioning."

CATHOLIC VIEWS ON CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS

The Constitution specifies (Article VI) that "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." Many Catholics resent the suggestion that special inquiry should be made into the political beliefs of a Catholic candidate. Despite the *Syllabus of Errors*, official Catholic dogma does contemplate separation of church and state. Pope Leo XIII,

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in an encyclical on the *Christian Constitution of States*, declared in 1885:

The Almighty . . . has appointed the charge of the human race between two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, the one being set over divine, and the other over human things. Each in its kind is supreme, each has fixed limits within which it is contained, limits which are defined by the nature and special object of the province of each, so that there is, we may say, an orbit traced out within which the action of each is brought into play by its own native right. Whatever in things human is of a sacred character, whatever belongs either of its own nature or by reason of the end to which it is referred, to the salvation of souls, or to the worship of God, is subject to the power and judgment of the Church. Whatever is to be ranged under the civil and political order is rightly subject to the civil authority. . . . It is not lawful for the State, any more than for the individual, either to disregard all religious duties or to hold in equal favor different kinds of religion.

Blanshard asserts that "the snare in this innocent-sounding proclamation is that if there is a dispute between the Catholic Church and the state over the right to rule any specific area, the Church and the Church alone has the right to decide who wins." Commenting on the same encyclical, Helen Hill Miller said that the burden of decision falls on the individual Catholic and, furthermore, that "Catholic thought on the subject is not monolithic."⁶ Thus, for example, Father John Courtney Murray, a leading Catholic theologian, has argued that doctrine developed in an era of European absolutism has little relevance to contemporary conditions in the United States.⁷

In a detailed survey of church-state relations in various countries with heavy Catholic majorities, Leo Pfeffer found a near union of church and state in Italy, Portugal, Spain and Peru. But in Ireland, although the special position of the Catholic Church is recognized, equality is granted as a practical matter to all other faiths. France maintains a complete separation of church and state, and in Mexico the treatment of the Catholic clergy has been decidedly hostile.⁸

The Catholic hierarchy in the United States often assumes an official position on matters of legislation through the National Catholic Welfare Conference. But in almost every case it is possible to find leading Catholic legislators

⁶ Helen Hill Miller, "A Catholic for President: Catholic Doctrine and the First Amendment," *New Republic*, Nov. 25, 1957, p. 10.

⁷ John Courtney Murray, S.J., "On the Structure of the Church-State Problem," in Waldemar Gurian and M. A. Fitzsimons, eds., *The Catholic Church in World Affairs* (1954).

⁸ Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State and Freedom* (1953), pp. 28-62.

who oppose the views so expressed. The N.C.W.C., for example, long has taken an official stand against federal grants to help pay teachers' salaries. But the senior author of the bill to authorize such grants is Sen. James E. Murray (D Mont.), a Catholic. Similarly, although the National Council of Catholic Nurses once opposed the Murray-Wagner-Dingell health bill on the ground that it might bring interference with Catholic medical-moral practices, all three of the bill's sponsors were Catholics. Justice Frank Murphy, a Catholic, stood with the Supreme Court majority in the *Everson* and *McCollum* decisions of 1947-48 which recognized "the wall of separation between church and state" and set limits on state aid to parochial schools. The Court's language in those cases has long been under heavy fire in Catholic circles.⁹

On many political matters there is an unofficial Catholic position of sorts, elaborated in the Catholic press and in public statements by members of the hierarchy. "In some Catholic publications," Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy (D Minn.) has written, "support of aid to Spain has been defined as a Catholic or pro-Catholic action, whereas support of aid to Yugoslavia has been interpreted as pro-Communist and even anti-Catholic."¹⁰ It scarcely need be added that agreement among Catholics on these matters has been far from unanimous.

POSITION OF KENNEDY; REACTIONS TO STATEMENT

So unmistakable is the identity of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution, however, and so widespread are the misconceptions about the relationship of the individual Catholic to the hierarchy that a Catholic candidate for public office may find it difficult to insist that his religion has no proper place in the campaign. Minnesota's Sen. McCarthy has suggested:

To the extent that religious beliefs may influence political action, any inquiry into the stand of a candidate on issues has some justification. . . . Questions might be raised about the position of a Christian Scientist on medical and health questions; a Quaker on national defense policy; a Catholic on a possible national divorce law.¹¹

As a practical matter, moreover, the Catholic candidate may seek an opportunity to neutralize that portion of anti-

⁹ James M. O'Neill, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (1952), pp. 36-43; also Blanshard, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

¹⁰ Eugene J. McCarthy, "Religion and Politics," *America*, April 11, 1959, p. 111.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

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Catholic feeling which stems from what he considers misconceptions of his relationship to the Church.

Sen. Kennedy's principal move in this direction to date took the form of an interview with Fletcher Knebel of *Look*, published in the magazine's issue of March 3, 1959, as part of a general article entitled, "Democratic Forecast: A Catholic in 1960." The Kennedy interview occupied only a small segment of the article. The verbatim portion follows:

Whatever one's religion in his private life may be [Kennedy said], for the officeholder nothing takes precedence over his oath to uphold the Constitution and all its parts—including the First Amendment and the strict separation of church and state. Without reference to the presidency, I believe as a senator that the separation of church and state is fundamental to our American concept and heritage and should remain so.

I am flatly opposed to appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican. Whatever advantages it might have in Rome—and I'm not convinced of these—they would be more than offset by the divisive effect at home.

The First Amendment to the Constitution is an infinitely wise one. There can be no question of federal funds being used for support of parochial or private schools. It's unconstitutional under the First Amendment as interpreted by the Supreme Court. I'm opposed to the federal government's extending support to sustain any church or its schools. As for such fringe matters as buses, lunches and other services, the issue is primarily social and economic and not religious. Each case must be judged on its merits within the law as interpreted by the courts.

Elsewhere in the article, though not in the form of direct quotation, Knebel cited other opinions of the Massachusetts senator:

Kennedy notes that he has opposed a number of positions taken by Catholic organizations and members of the hierarchy. He attended non-Catholic schools, from the elementary grades to Harvard. In Congress, Kennedy favored aid to Yugoslavia, aid to Communist satellite states, and the naming of Dr. James B. Conant as our first ambassador to West Germany. Some Catholic groups opposed the first two, and Catholics generally bridled at Conant because of his opposition to parochial schools as perpetuating a dual educational system he believed unhealthy for America.

Kennedy's statement provoked widespread criticism in the Catholic press. The *Catholic Review*, official organ of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, reproved the senator for trying "to placate the bigots." The Jesuit weekly, *America*, called the "cross-examination" of Kennedy "discriminatory, insulting and without pertinence." Specifically, it took issue with Kennedy's statement that nothing took precedence over

the oath to support the Constitution. "Kennedy doesn't really believe that," the magazine said. "No religious man . . . holds such an opinion. A man's conscience has a bearing on his public as well as private life." *Commonweal*, a lay weekly, thought Kennedy should have confined himself to making "the elementary point that there is no 'Catholic position' on these matters."

Protestant reactions were mixed. *Christian Century* approved "the forthright statement." Robert McAfee Brown, in *Christianity and Crisis*, agreed with Catholic commentators that Kennedy's position on the supremacy of the oath amounted "in point of fact to . . . denying one's faith and declaring it to be a sheer irrelevancy." C. Stanley Lowell, associate director of Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the *Look* article would "do much to reassure Protestants who have had honest doubts about a possible conflict of interest involving a presidential or vice presidential candidate of Catholic faith." Paul Blanshard, in a letter to the *Washington Post* on March 27, wrote concerning Kennedy's stand on the use of federal funds for parochial schools: "Kennedy stands with the [Supreme] Court and against his bishops. His statement is much more specific than Al Smith's famous Credo of 1927. I believe that it should be accepted as a forthright and important contribution to the settlement of the church-state issue in the 1960 campaign."

Outside sectarian circles, the Kennedy "credo" raised only a slight stir. Editorial reaction in the daily press was not extensive. Nor was there much fuss when Kennedy met privately on April 15 with the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church for "a general discussion of public questions." Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, one of the council's dominant figures and a leader in P.O.A.U., said later: "Speaking for myself, I don't think a man's religion ought to be a decisive factor in determining his ability to hold public office."

Anti-Catholicism in Past Campaigns

IN THE RELATIVELY NARROW middle range where elections are usually decided, the "Catholic issue" may still influence a decisive number of votes. Nonetheless, its significance is clearly marginal. Measured against earlier manifestations, the Catholic issue today is, by comparison, a small matter. In fact, its importance had declined appreciably by the time Al Smith received the Democratic nomination in 1928.

In the mid-1850s, anti-Catholic feeling was so powerful and so widespread in the United States that it constituted the chief common ground for a diverse movement which for a brief time dominated the politics of several states, elected one of its number Speaker of the House of Representatives¹² and at one point seemed capable even of capturing the White House. The American or Know Nothing Party, which appeared and disappeared with meteoric swiftness, disintegrated in controversy over the slavery issue. But its northern remnants continued to figure fairly prominently in the new Republican party.

This carry-over may help in part to explain the bitter reaction of Catholic voters in 1884 to the label, "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion," attached to the Democratic party by a Protestant clergyman, the Rev. Samuel D. Burchard, in the presence of James G. Blaine, Republican nominee for President. Blaine's efforts to disown Burchard's remark were fruitless, and the incident without question cost the Republicans the election. Although anti-Catholicism by this time had become something of a political liability, it was virtually the sole plank of the American Protective Association. That movement boasted of electing 100 members of Congress in 1894 and dreamed of exercising a decisive influence over the Republican nomination in 1896. McKinley, however, repudiated the group and its power was broken.

As late as the middle 1920s, with the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan, anti-Catholicism continued to be a major political force. However, Al Smith was nominated in 1928,

¹² Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts, a member of the House from 1853 to 1857 and again at various periods from 1865 to 1891. Banks' later service was as a Republican.

not as a gesture in the direction of religious tolerance, but because to hard-headed politicians he seemed the strongest Democrat available. Despite Klan opposition, Smith was expected to carry the South. Although Carter Glass of Virginia opposed Smith's nomination, he expressed belief early in 1927 that the New Yorker could be elected if the Democrats would avoid the issue of prohibition.

MARSHALL LETTER AND AL SMITH'S CREDO, 1927

The issue of Smith's Catholicism was raised directly and dramatically in Charles C. Marshall's "An Open Letter to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith," published by the *Atlantic Monthly* in April 1927. Marshall, prominent New York attorney and an Episcopalian, called on Smith to reconcile his personal political philosophy with Church doctrine on a number of points—education, marriage, the conflict of the Church with civil authority in Mexico and, above all, the alleged incompatibility between the Constitution of the United States and the two-powers theory of Leo XIII. Satisfactory answers to these questions, Marshall wrote, would resolve "the doubts of your fellow citizens."

Smith would have liked to ignore Marshall's challenge. The letter posed "questions of theology and canon law to which he was a complete stranger" and made it necessary to fight on "unfamiliar ground skillfully chosen to involve him in an endless mire of distinctions and dialectics."¹³ Smith's advisers, however, felt he had no choice. Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote him that, left unanswered, Marshall's letter would "cause a repetition of the questioning in many other publications and in the minds of a great many perfectly sincere people who ought to be on your side."

Accordingly, with the help of Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, his legal adviser, and Father Francis P. Duffy, famed chaplain of the 165th Regiment in World War I, Smith drafted the reply which became known as his "Credo." It was published in the *Atlantic* in May 1927 and produced a journalistic uproar. Smith asserted that Marshall had taken his entire thesis from a "limbo of defunct controversies." He quoted Church authorities in contradiction to those Marshall had cited and offered the record of his career as proof of his loyalty to the Constitution. The Credo concluded with these words:

¹³ Francis L. Broderick, "Smith and Kennedy on Church and State," *The Progressive*, June 1959, p. 19.

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I summarize my creed as an American Catholic. I believe in the worship of God according to the faith and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. I recognize no power in the institutions of my Church to interfere with the operations of the Constitution or the enforcement of the law of the land. I believe in absolute freedom of conscience for all men and in equality of all churches, all sections and all beliefs before the law as a matter of right and not as a matter of favor. I believe in the absolute separation of church and state and in the strict enforcement of the provisions of the Constitution that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. I believe that no tribunal of any church has any power to make any decree of any force in the law of the land, other than to establish the status of its own communicants within its own church. I believe in the support of the public school as one of the cornerstones of American liberty. I believe in the right of every parent to choose whether his child shall be educated in the public school or in a religious school supported by those of his own faith. I believe in the principle of non-interference by this country in the internal affairs of other nations and that we should stand steadfastly against such interference by whomsoever it may be urged. And I believe in the common brotherhood of man under the common fatherhood of God.

In this spirit I join with fellow Americans of all creeds in a fervent prayer that never again in this land will any public servant be challenged because of the faith in which he has tried to walk humbly with his God.

Newspaper reaction to the Smith statement was overwhelmingly friendly. But in the lengthy preliminaries to the party conventions and in the campaign that followed the issue was raised again and again. The Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover, condemned this type of campaigning unqualifiedly. Some of his supporters were less scrupulous. A national committeewoman from Virginia, Mrs. Willie W. Caldwell, circulated a letter calling on Republican women "in this hour of very vital moral religious crisis" to "save the United States from being Romanized and rum-ridden." William Allen White created a sensation by charging, at the Kansas Republican convention in July 1928, that Smith's candidacy endangered "the whole Puritan civilization which has built a sturdy, orderly nation."¹⁴ Outside the party structure a direct attack on Smith's religious faith was launched by leading members

¹⁴ In addition, White accused Smith of complete subservience to Tammany Hall and charged him with being an agent for "sinister forces" of organized vice. When Walter Lippmann explained that Smith opposed bills in the New York legislature to regulate gambling and prostitution because he considered them unconstitutional, unenforceable and corrupting, White composed a partial retraction. Elmer Davis thereafter remarked in a letter to the *New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1928: "There ought to be some Pulitzer prize to give adequate recognition to the unique talent of William Allen White. None of the rest of us can put so much poison into a libel as he manages to leave in a retraction."

of the Protestant clergy, organized chiefly through a conference of Southern drys at Asheville, N. C., in July 1928. The principal figures in the campaign were Bishop James Cannon of the Methodist Church and Arthur James Barton, a Baptist clergyman, but important Presbyterian and Lutheran leaders joined in. Alabama's Sen. Tom Heflin, a violent anti-Catholic, actively sabotaged Smith in the South as did several other party leaders. Mrs. Mabel Walker Willebrandt, an assistant attorney general in charge of prohibition cases, was put "on a kind of informal lend-lease arrangement for talks before church conferences or meetings."¹⁵

As the attacks mounted, Smith decided to meet the issue once again. At Oklahoma City on Sept. 20, he denounced attempts "to inject bigotry, hatred, intolerance and un-American sectarian division" into the campaign. "I have been told that politically it might be expedient for me to remain silent upon this subject," Smith said, "but so far as I am concerned no political expediency will keep me from speaking out. . . . There is abundant reason for believing that Republicans high in the councils of the party have countenanced a large part of this form of campaign if they have not actually promoted it."

INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS ISSUE IN SMITH DEFEAT

When the votes were counted in November, Smith had amassed a larger total than any Democrat had previously received. In terms of electoral votes, however, it was an unexpectedly crushing defeat. Smith lost not only all of the border states but also four states of the hitherto Solid South—Florida, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia. In the South only Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina remained loyal to the Democratic standard, and only Louisiana and South Carolina returned anything approaching normal majorities. Outside the South, Smith won only Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The extent and pattern of Smith's disaster led many to assume that he was beaten by religious prejudice, but studies by competent election analysts and historians tend to throw doubt on that assumption. Edmund A. Moore, author of a highly regarded book on the 1928 campaign,

¹⁵ Edmund A. Moore, *A Catholic Runs for President* (1956), p. 175.

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told a symposium in Washington, D. C., on Dec. 29, 1958, that Smith was defeated by an amalgam of issues. "Consider the heavy load Smith bore," Moore said. "He was a Tammany product, a wet, a Catholic, a symbol for the newer immigrants and he was represented as socially unfit for the White House." Also to be considered were the urban-rural divisions within the Democratic party, clearly demonstrated in the long-deadlocked 1924 convention, and, perhaps most important of all, the prevailing prosperity. "The use of the word 'religious' as appropriate to the kind of opposition that existed toward [Smith]," Moore wrote in his book, "raises the question whether the part has not been taken for the whole. . . . One is tempted to conclude that the Democratic party was predestined to suffer defeat in all three presidential elections in the twenties."¹⁶

An article published in *Social Forces* in December 1929 suggested that the prohibition issue swayed a good many more votes than the religious issue—perhaps three times as many. William F. Ogburn and Nell Snow Talbot based this judgment on a statistical analysis of returns from 173 counties outside the South. D. W. Brogan has pointed out that the states Smith lost in the Solid South were not fundamentalist strongholds, as might have been expected if the vote had hinged solely on the religious issue; instead they were "the least backward and least evangelical southern states."¹⁷ Of particular interest in this connection is the fact that the pattern of Republican incursion in 1928 closely approximated that in 1952 and 1956, when the issues were quite different; of the states of the Solid South which defected to Hoover in 1928, only North Carolina stuck with Stevenson in 1952 and 1956.

That Smith's Catholicism cost him some votes is evident. But it is equally clear that he picked up large numbers of previously Republican votes in certain areas, and that this surplus was closely related to the proportion of Catholics in the local population. Louis H. Bean, in *How to Predict Elections* (1948), presented figures which purported to show that Smith raised the normal Democratic vote in 14 of the 18 states where Catholics in 1926 constituted more than 40 per cent of total church membership. Among the remaining 30 states, only seven showed an

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁷ Quoted by Wilfred E. Binkley, *American Political Parties: Their Natural History* (second edition, 1945), p. 375.

excess for Smith over the Democratic "normal"; of these seven, all except Utah, a heavily Mormon state, were 26 per cent or more Catholic. Equally impressive is the fact that of 122 northern counties which Smith took away from the Republicans, 77 were predominantly Catholic.

Perhaps most significant of all was Smith's performance in the nation's largest cities, where he managed to convert a Republican plurality of 1.3 million in 1924 into a Democratic plurality of 38,000.¹⁸ Seen in the context of earlier and later elections, the composite pattern of Smith support and Smith opposition in 1928 reflects the beginnings of the political revolution which Franklin D. Roosevelt was to carry forward in 1932 and 1936. As Samuel Lubell has written: "Before the Roosevelt Revolution there was an Al Smith Revolution. . . . It was Smith who first slashed through the traditional alignments that had held so firmly since the Civil War, clearing the way for the more comprehensive realignment which came later."¹⁹ In that operation, Smith's religion may have helped as much as or more than it hindered him.

Catholic Vote and the 1960 Election

WHILE SEN. KENNEDY was bidding for the Democratic vice presidential nomination in 1956, John M. Bailey, Democratic state chairman for Connecticut, circulated a lengthy memorandum asserting that "there is, or can be, such a thing as a 'Catholic vote'" and that the way to tap it was to put a Catholic on the national ticket. An answering memorandum, prepared by Louis H. Bean and a group of social scientists favoring the vice presidential candidacy of Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, insisted that "The data contained in the Bailey memorandum . . . do not support the affirmative conclusions."²⁰ The social scientists cited Daniel F. Cleary (*Catholicism in America*) to the effect that: "What people call the 'Catholic vote' cannot be 'delivered'

¹⁸ Samuel Lubell, *The Future of American Politics* (1952), p. 34. Lubell's figures, covering the period from 1920 through 1948, are for the nation's "12 largest cities (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, St. Louis, Boston, Milwaukee, San Francisco and Los Angeles)." Prior to 1930, the 12 largest cities included Buffalo in place of Milwaukee.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁰ For summary of Bailey memorandum and the reply, see *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, Aug. 10, 1956, pp. 997-999.

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to any candidate or party. Catholics are by no means a politically monolithic group."

EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY SO-CALLED CATHOLIC VOTE

Taken together, the two memoranda suggest three lines of inquiry. *First*, is there a Catholic vote as such? *Secondly*, if yes, will it swing behind a co-religionist? *Thirdly*, if yes, would such a swing, balanced against the putative strength of an anti-Catholic vote, improve a Catholic candidate's chances of election? While none of these questions, least of all the third, can be answered with assurance, the available evidence provides some clues.

On the basis of a study of the presidential vote in Elmira, N. Y., in 1948, a team of researchers, led by Paul F. Lazarsfeld of Columbia and Bernard Berelson of the Ford Foundation, concluded: "Catholic affiliation (and the ethnic differences it represents) appears to be a stronger influence upon vote than any other single factor. . . . On each socio-economic status level about half as many Catholics vote Republican as Protestants. Catholics of high status vote more Democratic than do Protestants of low status; thus Catholic affiliation is stronger than socio-economic status in determining vote."²¹ On the other hand, the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, after a sample survey of attitudes of voters in the 1954 congressional election, decided that "Knowing that a person is a Protestant or a Catholic tells us a great deal more about his religious beliefs than it does about his politics."²²

STUDIES OF THE VOTING BEHAVIOR OF CATHOLICS

The composite picture may not be as confusing and contradictory as it appears, however. The key may lie in the possibility that "individual members of the group [in this case, Catholics] are reacting similarly but independently to some outside factor which affects them differently than it does the rest of the population."²³ If Lubell is correct, Catholics have been deserting the Democratic party in

²¹ Bernard R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld and William N. McPhee, *Voting* (1954), pp. 64-65. Will Herberg, in *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1956), p. 228, reported, on the basis of a national survey, that the U.S. population could be broken down as follows: 13.1 per cent "upper class," 30.7 per cent "middle class" and 56.2 per cent "lower class." For Catholics, the comparable results were 8.7 per cent, 24.7 per cent and 66.6 per cent.

²² Angus Campbell and Homer Cooper, *Group Differences in Attitudes and Votes* (1956), p. 102. A Michigan study of voting in the 1952 presidential election suggested that "the simple classification of voters in sociological categories does not have the explanatory power" attributed to it by Lazarsfeld and Berelson.—Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin and Warren E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (1954), p. 85.

²³ Campbell and Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

wholesale numbers in recent years, in response to the pull of issues which affected them with greater intensity than they affected the remainder of the population. In *The Future of American Politics*, Lubell described an alienation of Irish and German Catholics from the Democratic party as early as 1936, at the zenith of the New Deal, motivated, he suggested, by concern over the Spanish civil war. The growing threat of Soviet power and rising emphasis on the internal security problem may help to explain a radical change in the distribution of the Catholic vote between 1944 and 1952. The inflexible opposition of their church to communism may have made Catholics unusually receptive to these issues.

Milton S. Gwirtsman showed in 1954 how Catholic areas in New York State had defected from the Democratic standard, beginning in a small way in 1936 and reaching major proportions in 1952. Gwirtsman attributed this shift to the communism issue. Data collected by the Survey Research Center from voters in the 1954 election seem to support this finding. Although the survey showed little or no difference, for example, in the attitudes of Protestants and Catholics toward U.S. involvement in world affairs, there was a striking difference in the response of the two groups to Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy. At this period, when McCarthy was already clearly marked for censure by the Senate, 21 per cent of Catholics but only 9 per cent of Protestants and 3 per cent of Jews still supported the Wisconsin senator. Sharper differences in attitudes toward McCarthy showed up when those questioned were grouped according to religion than when they were grouped in any other way—by sex, race, age, education, size of community, occupation, income levels, union affiliation, or even party affiliation.

Evidence concerning Catholic response to a Catholic candidate is more fragmentary. A recent study by *Congressional Quarterly* of election data in the 1958 Minnesota senatorial race suggests that Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy ran better than "normal" against incumbent Sen. Edward J. Thye in Catholic areas.²⁴ The Gallup Poll on May 5, 1959, reported that 52 per cent of Catholics questioned said they might bolt their own party to support a Catholic running on a rival ticket. Another 11 per cent said they didn't know. Prof. Lawrence H. Fuchs of Brandeis University

²⁴ *Congressional Quarterly, Weekly Report*, Sept. 4, 1959, pp. 1210-1213.

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has theorized: "When issues and party philosophies are not important to voters, they look to the personal qualifications of candidates. Such things as attendance at the right church may become important to them, and if all other things appear to be equal, they will vote for their own kind."²⁵

DISTRIBUTION OF CATHOLICS IN THE UNITED STATES

So strong is American sensitivity to any hint of prying into religious beliefs that no wholly adequate count of the population by religious preference exists.²⁶ The last full-scale study carried out by the Census Bureau, in 1936, was based on figures reported by central organizations of the various denominations. Because of differing membership standards, the survey contained built-in errors. A sample survey conducted by the Census Bureau in March 1957 was based on preferences stated by individuals questioned. However, it reported only on persons 14 years of age and over and made no state-by-state analysis.

The census figures showed that 25.7 per cent of the age group covered considered themselves Catholic. In the Northeast the Catholic proportion was 45.1 per cent; in the North Central states, 24.7 per cent; in the South, 11.6 per cent; in the West, 22.3 per cent. The Catholic Church itself in 1958 estimated its strength, based on "recognized membership," at 36 million or 22.5 per cent of the population.²⁷ The accompanying table presents a breakdown of the latter compilation by states.

The Bailey memorandum mentioned earlier cited 14 "pivotal states" with 20 per cent or more of Catholic population—Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Montana, California—all of which had gone for Eisenhower in 1952 (and all of which again went for Eisenhower in 1956). The memorandum

²⁵ Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The Political Behavior of American Jews* (1956), p. 14.

²⁶ The Census Bureau announced, Dec. 12, 1957, that it had abandoned a plan to include a question about religious preference in the 1960 census. The American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Congress, and some Christian Science groups, among others, had objected on the ground either that the question would encroach on separation of church and state or would violate the privacy of conscience. Inclusion of the question had been favored by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Council of Catholic Men, and the Population Association of America. Answering of questions is required by law in the case of the decennial census but is voluntary in the case of sample surveys by the Census Bureau.

²⁷ A projection of the Census Bureau's 1957 figures, published in the *Official Catholic Directory* for 1958, put the Catholic population of the country at 43.6 million, out of a total of approximately 160 million.

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CATHOLIC PERCENTAGES OF POPULATION BY STATES

(Computed from figures given in *Official Catholic Directory, 1958*)

<i>New England</i>		<i>South Atlantic</i> (Continued)	
Maine	26.7%	West Virginia	3.9%†
New Hampshire	37.4	North Carolina	0.8
Vermont	31.1	South Carolina	1.3
Massachusetts	52.2	Georgia	1.4
Rhode Island	60.1	Florida	7.0
Connecticut	46.9	<i>East South Central</i>	
<i>Middle Atlantic</i>		Kentucky	9.0
New York	34.4	Tennessee	2.2
New Jersey	41.8†	Alabama	3.0
Pennsylvania	30.5	Mississippi	2.8
<i>East North Central</i>		Arkansas	2.4
Ohio	21.3	Louisiana	35.0
Indiana	14.2	Oklahoma	4.2
Illinois	30.7	Texas	21.2
Michigan	24.9	<i>Rocky Mountain</i>	
Wisconsin	32.6	Montana	22.4†
<i>West North Central</i>		Idaho	5.4
Minnesota	27.1	Wyoming	16.3†
Iowa	15.8	Colorado	16.7
Missouri	15.4	New Mexico	43.1
North Dakota	23.8	Arizona	24.6
South Dakota	18.9	Utah	(4.4)*
Nebraska	17.5	Nevada	20.7
Kansas	12.7	<i>Pacific</i>	
<i>South Atlantic</i>		Washington	11.8
Delaware	6.8†	Oregon	(7.3)*
Maryland	23.3	California	21.3†
Virginia	4.1	Alaska	14.7
		Hawaii	28.1

†The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. gives slightly higher figures for these states in 1955 and lower figures for all others except Arizona where figures are the same.—*Churches and Church Membership in the United States* (1956).

*Figures for Utah and Oregon not given in *Official Catholic Directory*. Figures used are those of National Council of Churches.

argued that these states might be lured back into the Democratic camp by the presence of a Catholic on the national ticket. The 14 states will have a total of 261 electoral votes in 1960 or only eight short of the 269 required to elect a President.

The Bailey list omitted New Mexico with 40 per cent plus Catholic population. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and North Dakota also were excluded, presumably because they have regularly gone Republican, although Maine showed in 1958 that it is accessible to the Democrats.

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ELECTORAL VOTES OF STATES WITH HEAVY CATHOLIC POPULATION

<i>Bailey List</i>		<i>Other States with heavy Catholic population and potential Democratic majorities</i>
Massachusetts	16	
Rhode Island	4	
Connecticut	8	Maine
New York	45	Louisiana
New Jersey	16	Texas
Pennsylvania	32	New Mexico
Maryland	9	Arizona
Ohio	25	Nevada
Illinois	27	Hawaii
Michigan	20	
Minnesota	11	
Wisconsin	12	
Montana	4	21-state total: 314 electoral votes.
California	32	Needed to elect in 1960: 269 electoral votes.
	261	

Other states with a Catholic population of more than 20 per cent are Arizona, Louisiana, Nevada, Texas, and Hawaii. These five, plus New Mexico and Maine, have 53 electoral votes among them. With the exception of Maine, all 21 states went Democratic in the presidential elections either of 1944 or 1948—in most cases both times.

Estimates of this sort are perhaps more useful in promoting candidates for nomination than in objective analysis. As has been pointed out, any presumptive Catholic "pull" toward a fellow Catholic would operate only if other things were equal. Presumably, "other things" are less likely to be equal in a presidential election than, for example, in a city council race. Moreover, Catholic and anti-Catholic votes might offset each other.

It is quite clear to politicians, however, that Catholics have a great deal of voting power in the United States, particularly in the pivotal states. That is why most leading Democrats seem to take it for granted that whatever happens to Sen. Kennedy's bid for the presidential nomination, a Catholic—Kennedy, Gov. Brown of California, Mayor Robert F. Wagner of New York, or any one of several others—is almost certain to be on the party's national ticket in 1960. Brown, though disclaiming interest in the vice presidential nomination, has said it would be an honor to be on the ticket with Stevenson. Stevenson has not ruled out a draft, and with California now a state of top importance from the standpoint of electoral votes, its gov-

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ernor would be in position to provide highly attractive political as well as religious balance to next year's Democratic offering. A question for the more distant future is whether both Democrats and Republicans will regularly find it expedient to balance their presidential tickets religiously as well as geographically.



